



THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

#8 / Election
7/16/02

Applicant: Stefan REH *et al.*

Atty. Dkt. No. 076326/0194

Title: METHOD AND DEVICE FOR FORMING A
TEAR LINE IN AN AIRBAG COVER, AND
THE COVER THEREOF

V. Hant

Appl. No.: 09/944,157

Filed: September 4, 2001

Examiner: O. F. Sanchez

Art Unit: 3724

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RESPONSE TO ELECTION/RESTRICTION REQUIREMENT

Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

In response to the Office Action mailed June 12, 2002, please consider the following remarks.

Applicants hereby elect (with traverse) Group 1, Species 1 (Figs. 1-3) for prosecution in the subject application. Claims 1-17 are readable on the elected species. Claim 1 is generic to all species.

Applicants traverse the restriction of Groups I and II and request examination of claims 18-20, because the reason given for the restriction requirement is insufficient. The Examiner contends that "the method or forming a weakening area in [an] airbag cover could be practiced by hand." Applicants disagree.

Claim 1 calls for a method of forming a weakening area in an airbag cover including the step of:

cutting a tear line of a predetermined pattern through the support layer and into the decorative layer with the cutter while controlling the depth of cut relative to the support to precisely control the residual thickness of the tear line and to prevent the cutter from penetrating through the decorative layer.

Contrary to the Examiner's contention, the method step set forth above could not be practiced by hand, because the resulting tear line must have a defined residual thickness in order to have a defined tearing force. This feature of the tear line ensures that a deploying airbag can unfold through an aperture in the airbag cover reliably. If the tear lines were made by hand, a defined residual thickness of the airbag cover could not be assured due to the differing thicknesses and materials used for the airbag cover. A method practiced by hand could not "precisely control the residual thickness of the tear line", as called for in claim 1.

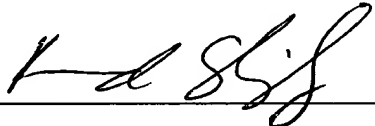
Reconsideration and withdrawal of the restriction requirement is accordingly requested.

Applicants, of course, reserve the right to file one or more divisional applications covering the non-elected subject matter and/or to receive consideration of claims to additional species as provided by 37 CFR 1.141, upon allowance of any claim that is generic. If the Examiner has any questions or comments she is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number below.

Receipt of the initial Office Action on the merits is awaited.

Respectfully submitted,

Date 7/11/2002

By 

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